

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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KLEPPE CALLS FORD PROGRAM COMMITMENT FOR IMPROVED WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Secretary of the Interior Thomas S. Kleppe today called President Ford's Bicentennial Land Heritage Program a monumental commitment to improve wildlife habitat and management.

In remarks before the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies in Dearborn, Michigan, Secretary Kleppe said: "It is my hope that you who are influential spokesmen for wildlife preservation and outdoor recreation will help us get the necessary Congressional action and will work with us to implement this program."

The Secretary said that the Land Heritage Program was needed to enable the Department to move ahead on its park and refuge programs. "During the past decade," he said, "the emphasis has been on acquiring land. Now the emphasis should be on developing what we have so that it can serve the needs of the people for recreation and the needs of wildlife for protection."

Secretary Kleppe emphasized that the help of the States is needed to achieve a solid program for cooperative State-Federal wildlife management. "It is not our intent to ask Congress for any legislation which would in anyway provide authority for Federal regulation of wildlife species on the public lands," he said. "The States have and will continue to set hunting, fishing, and trapping laws and regulations which apply on those lands, except as modified by Federal legislation."

Secretary Kleppe said that in the past two decades the National Wildlife Refuge system has doubled in size and public visitation has quadrupled to 30 million per year, while staffing has not increased in the past 10 years and facilities have deteriorated. He said that President Ford's program would assure achieving the primary purpose of the refuges--providing areas where wildlife can propagate so that a healthy balance in the ecology can be maintained.

The text of Secretary's remarks is attached.

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